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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000465

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS AND DS/IP/SA

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [EAID](#) [CASC](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: US NGO CONFIRMS MAOIST THREAT IN SIRAHA DISTRICT

Classified By: DCM RKBGGS. REASON: 1.5 (B,D).

1. (C) Summary: On March 13 Keith Leslie (protect), Country Director for Save the Children US, confirmed that Nepali NGOs partnered with SAVE in the southeastern district of Siraha had received Maoist threats. Leslie advised that all SAVE staff in the district (all of whom are Nepali) have been moved temporarily out of Siraha to Biratnagar. SAVE will reassess the situation at the end of the month. End summary.

2. (C) On March 13 Save the Children US Country Director Keith Leslie (protect) confirmed to the Embassy that two of SAVE's Nepali partner NGOs in Siraha District (about 400 km southeast of Kathmandu) had reported receiving Maoist threats directed against SAVE. The threats, accusing SAVE aid workers of being "spies" and "giving oxygen" to the royal government, were posted on the doors of the partners' offices. (Note: SAVE does not maintain its own project office in Siraha, but runs activities, in partnership with three Nepali NGOs, involving primary school education, school construction, early childhood development, and neonatal and maternal health. The programs operate in 24 communities in the district. SAVE has no American or expatriate staff members in Siraha. End note.)

3. (C) As a precautionary measure, SAVE temporarily has moved all of its Nepali staff from Siraha to Biratnagar, a larger city with better security in the southeastern corner of the country. Leslie said SAVE will reassess the situation at the end of the month to determine if and when the staff can return to Siraha.

4. (C) Because SAVE has been operating in Siraha for many years and its programs are popular, Leslie expressed optimism that the problem will be quickly resolved. In fact, he said, the Maoists' district commander in Siraha earlier had let SAVE know that he approved of its programs and that no action would be taken against the organization despite its U.S. affiliation. Leslie speculated that the threats were issued without the knowledge or approval of the district commander, who is believed currently to be away from the area, and might reflect schisms within the Maoist organization. "Discussions are ongoing," he said, and he is hopeful that Nepali SAVE staff will be able to return to Siraha soon. When asked if he had contacted the Government of Nepal, Leslie said no, adding "They can't help." Instead, he said he would rely on community pressure from the beneficiaries of SAVE programs to persuade the Maoists to allow their operations to resume.

5. (C) Comment: SAVE-US' American affiliation has earned it unwelcome attention before from the Maoists. In September SAVE-US closed down a project early in the north-central district of Nuwakot because of Maoist threats and intimidation. We have been hearing that Maoists from the west and mid-west have been moved into eastern areas of Nepal; the threats against SAVE in Siraha, which contradict what apparently had been the now-absent district commander's laissez-faire policy, may reflect a transfer of "harder-core" cadres from the Maoist heartland into less-affected southern areas along the Indian border. We have no doubt that SAVE's programs are popular with the poor and disadvantaged in Siraha, but fear that the Maoists--who have never shown any particular regard for the poor people they claim form their constituency--may be unmoved by that argument. If anything, the Maoists may view effective pro-poor activities by a US-affiliated agency as a threat to their own spurious claims to represent the interests of the oppressed. We will continue to consult with SAVE officials as the situation develops.

MALINOWSKI